

**Reminiscences of Seattle, Washington Territory, and the U.S.
Sloop-of-War "Decatur" during the Indian War of 1855-1856
/ by T.S. Phelps ... ; ed. by Alice Harriman. v.2**

Phelps, Thomas Stowell, 1822-1901.

Seattle : The Alice Harriman Co., 1908.

<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/yale.39002005686457>

HathiTrust



www.hathitrust.org

Public Domain

http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd

This work is in the Public Domain, meaning that it is not subject to copyright. Users are free to copy, use, and redistribute the work in part or in whole. It is possible that heirs or the estate of the authors of individual portions of the work, such as illustrations, assert copyrights over these portions. Depending on the nature of subsequent use that is made, additional rights may need to be obtained independently of anything we can address.

Yale University Library



39002005686457

Puget Sound historical series.
no.2.

Cr16
588
2

Digitization Support by
MK ROSSOFT

Original from
YALE UNIVERSITY

Cn16
588
2



YALE UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY



1937

PUGET SOUND HISTORICAL SERIES

No. 2

Reminiscences of Seattle

WASHINGTON TERRITORY

AND THE

U. S. SLOOP-OF-WAR "DECATUR"

DURING THE

 FRENCH WAR OF 1855-1856

BY THE LATE

T. S. PHELPS, REAR ADMIRAL, U. S. NAVY

Reprinted from first series of "United Service Magazine"

EDITED BY

ALICE HARRIMAN

SEATTLE

THE ALICE HARRIMAN COMPANY

304 NEW YORK BLOCK

1908

*REMINISCENCES OF SEATTLE, WASHINGTON TERRITORY, AND THE U. S. SLOOP-OF-WAR
"DECATUR," DURING THE INDIAN
WAR OF 1855-56.*

PRIOR to the year 1849, save the small Hudson Bay trading-post at Nisqually, no settlement by the whites had been made in the Territory of Washington west of the Cascade Range. During the latter part of that year a band of Americans, few in number, wandered to the head-waters of Budd's Inlet, and, clearing away the dense forests, founded the town of Olympia. Subsequently other small hamlets sprang up along the shores of Puget Sound and Admiralty Inlet, with an occasional saw-mill dotting the heavily timbered bays, and during the first years of the Territorial existence no records appear to have been written.

The Indian war of 1855-56 brought the U. S. sloop-of-war "Decatur" to the assistance of this sparsely-settled region, and during her active participation in the stirring scenes of that time the author, for his own amusement, carefully noted events as they fell beneath his observation, and those transpiring previous to his arrival were carefully collected from the actors themselves, and found their proper places in his journal; and on the final departure of the "Decatur" from Puget Sound he had massed together material possessing interest to the casual reader, and, in the absence of better data, of value to the historian. Seventeen years after the events to be narrated had passed away I revisited the scenes of that memorable year, in an unusually interesting cruise extending over a period of forty-two months, and the surviving pioneers, deploring their unpardonable neglect in not preserving written evidences of their past, earnestly besought me to make public the notes in my possession, in order to secure at least the semblance of a history of early days in Washington. To gratify those old companions in arms, and also to furnish material for the future historian, meagre though it may be, I have endeavored to convert the rough notes of a journal into a readable form, and in giving

my personal experiences during the year passed in the inland waters of Washington, an important period in Seattle's early history is necessarily portrayed; therefore, on the ensuing pages will be found a faithful narrative of events as they passed before the writer's eyes, and as seen from his stand-point, to be accepted as a reliable history of those times and of the Indian war in Washington Territory in its connection with Seattle and immediate vicinity, carefully avoiding, as far as consistent with this narrative, all matters pertaining to the operations of our army and the Washington Territory Volunteers, leaving the record of their brilliant achievements to a writer more familiar with their history.

The first settlement on the shores of Duwam-sh* Bay was made in April, 1852, by a Dr. Maynard and Messrs. Denny, Bell, and Boren. Others soon followed, among whom were Mr. and Mrs. McConahan, whose importance in the colony became sensibly increased on September 18, 1852, by the birth of a daughter; and Miss Eugenie McConahan bears the honor of being the first white child born in Seattle.

Mr. Henry L. Yesler, a native of Pennsylvania, arrived on the first of October, and soon afterwards commenced the erection of a saw-mill, which simple act seems to have been the means of establishing the nucleus of a city, which, occupying a central position in the navigable waters of the Territory, possessing an excellent, well-sheltered harbor, and in being the terminus of three river routes leading from the mountain passes, is destined probably to become the great commercial city of Northwest America.

The name Seattle, borrowed from the chief of the Duwam-sh Indians (allied tribes) inhabiting the shores of the bay, was selected by the colonists for the little town established on a point, or rather a small peninsula, projecting from the eastern shore, and about two miles from the mouth of Duwam-sh River, debouching at the head of the bay. The northern part of this peninsula is connected with the mainland by a low neck of marshy ground, and about one-sixteenth of a mile from its southeastern extremity a firm, hard sand-pit nearly joined it to the adjacent shore, severed only by a narrow channel through which the surplus waters of an inclosed swamp escaped into the bay. The south and west sides rose abruptly from the beach, forming an embankment from three to fifteen feet high; and proceeding thence northerly, the

*The Indians pronouuce it *Duwamps*.

ground undulated for an eighth of a mile, when it gradually sloped towards the swamp and neck.

At the intersection of the latter with the main, and overlooking the water, rose a mound about thirty feet above the level of the bay; and to the eastward through a depression in the hills, and passing the head of the swamp, was a broad Indian trail leading to Lake Duwam-sh, distant two and a half miles.

From the shores, back towards the interior, the country was moderately rolling, heavily timbered, and overgrown with a dense undergrowth, penetrated by trails connecting the inlet with the mountain passes and other important points in the Territory. Subsequently to the erection of the saw-mill, by depositing large quantities of earth and sawdust over the neck, Mr. Yesler succeeded in converting it into firm, stable ground, upon which, half-way between the mound and swamp, he established his residence, a substantial log house, capable of accommodating himself and workmen; afterwards other houses were built upon this made land, generally known and termed as the "Sawdust."

The mill was set up on the beach at the intersection of the neck with the mound, and the dwellings of the earliest settlers were located more to the southward, on higher ground, and as immigration increased the village spread over the peninsula and along the hill-side to the westward, facing the water, and in October, 1855, the place numbered fifty souls and about thirty houses, including a church, hotel, boarding-house, five or six stores, and a blacksmith and carpenter-shop. Within a radius of thirty miles the white population amounted to about one hundred and twenty, making a total of one hundred and seventy men, women and children in Seattle and vicinity.

Seattle was an intelligent Flathead Indian of medium height and prominent features, chief of the nation occupying the western shore of Admiralty Inlet contiguous to Port Madison, and, coveting the rich lands and excellent fishing grounds of the opposite bay, waged war incessantly against the Duwam-sh tribe, who occupied this land of promise, until, exhausted in resources and warriors, the latter family succumbed and acknowledged him as their master.*

*The Indians occupying the Puget Sound Basin south of Port Townsend sprang from the great Selish root; but in the early days were usually mentioned as the Nisqually nation. They were divided into a large number of small bands, having little political connection; but gathered into families, allied by similarity of dialect and by relationship. The whites usually distinguished

Suc-quardle, better known as Curley, the hereditary chief, accepted the fortune of war and quietly submitted to his rule, and both chiefs appeared to live on friendly terms with the "Bostons," as Americans were called, in contradistinction to King George's men, which included all of English origin.

Beyond furnishing a name for the new settlement, Seattle does not appear to have figured in the subsequent history of the Territory, while Curley and members of his family became important factors in the annals of the colony, especially a young Indian bearing the name of Yark-eke-e-man, commonly called Jim. This native, by some inexplicable instinct, attached himself to the white settlers, and served their interests with unswerving fidelity until near the close of the war, when, unfortunately, he lost his life from a wound received by the accidental discharge of his gun while hunting. He was accompanied by Surgeon Jeffrey of the "Decatur," and under the doctor's care probably would have recovered, but the Indians, distrusting his practice of medicine and surgery, and contrary to the earnest entreaties of the officers, determined upon administering their own popular and more efficacious method of treatment, known as Ma-mouk-ing ta-ma-neous, which is performed by laying the patient prone upon a board, on the ground, and then, while his friends, dressed in fantastic garb and smeared with paint, drum upon boards, sing, dance, shout, and howl, till wrought to a state of frenzy, and the night "becomes hideous" with their bewildering din, the medicine man is gravely engaged in walking on his knees over the entire body of the patient, frequently stopping to pinch, punch, pound, and knead him with his fists, muttering some incomprehensible incantations all the while; and when morning appeared it was not at all surprising to learn that long before the ceremony had concluded poor Jim had departed for the happy hunting-ground of his fathers.

The advent of the whites was a pleasant episode in the lives of these savage people; their arms opened to receive them as superior beings, and the lands they possessed were freely offered for their acceptance, reserving for themselves only their potato-patches and the right to fish in the waters of the sound.

these small bands by the names of the streams or lakes on which they generally maintained their camps. Seattle's home was on the north side of the narrow inlet that separates Bainbridge Island from the mainland. Later, a small Indian reservation was established at that place.

The early settlers, I believe, were always kind, just and considerate in dealing with the natives, and, so far as I know, retained to the last their friendship and good will; but as the country filled with new arrivals, many rough characters, so-called "pioneers of civilization," from the Western frontier and other States, appeared, who, regardless of the rights appertaining to the natives, seized their reserved lands, drove them from the fisheries, deprived them of their just dues, surreptitiously shot some, hung others, and became ingenious in their methods of oppression, until their victims, roused from the lethargy enshrouding their faculties, began to exhibit signs of discontent, yet endured patiently, hoping for a beneficial change in their condition, till the final blow to their anticipations came in 1854 with the delivery of some two hundred thousand dollars in presents, a preliminary measure on the part of the government to treaty stipulations with the tribes, which, being distributed by the agents in such a fraudulent, unjust, and outrageous manner, finally forced their eyes open to the certainties of the future, and from that moment they resolutely determined to be rid of the detestable pests fastening upon them.

The first real symptoms of a change appeared soon after Governor I. I. Stevens became the executive; not that he had offended them, but the spirit of vengeance was abroad, and the oppressed tribes were bent upon exterminating every white inhabitant in the Territory, irrespective of age, sex, or condition. The governor, and people residing around the head-waters of the sound, were blind to the signs of the times, and would not, nor could they be made to, see the impending dangers threatening both lives and property. And at a most inappropriate moment, early in the summer of 1855, that official departed for the country of the Nez Percés and Cœur d'Alenes, in order to negotiate treaties with these tribes, leaving the secretary, Charles H. Mason, Esq., in charge of the executive chair.

At this period, bordering on Puget Sound and adjacent waters, were small settlements at Bellingham Bay, Port Townsend, Seattle, Steilacoom, Nisqually, and Olympia, besides saw-mills established at Ports Madison, Ludlow, Gamble, and other places in Admiralty Inlet and Hood's Canal. Away from the water clearings had been made, and numerous flourishing homes dotted the forests, and the total white population of the Territory was estimated at two thousand souls.

With this brief outline of history we reach the month of June, 1855, at which time the U. S. sloop-of-war "Decatur," Commander I. S. Starrett, then at anchor in the harbor of Honolulu, Sandwich Islands, received orders to "cruise on the coast of Oregon and California for the protection of settlers," and by the 23d inst. she was on the ocean, bound upon a mission of incalculable importance to the inhabitants of our remote Territory in the Northwest. The orders being special, necessitated our steering for that point where the force at our command could be displayed to the best interests of the people requiring protection.

Columbia River naturally suggested itself as being pre-eminent in this respect, but after carefully considering the subject, Captain Starrett decided upon the inland waters of Washington for the scene of immediate operations, and the course was accordingly laid for the Strait of Fuca.

This apparent deviation from the letter of our instructions proved, in the end, to be the salvation of every white inhabitant in the Territory. Seventy-five days after leaving Honolulu the Strait of Fuca was reached, and an English trader at Port San Juan, Vancouver's Island, gave information of a meditated attack of many thousands of the Northern Indians upon those of Vancouver's Island and Washington Territory. Proceeding immediately to Port Townsend, where casting anchor on the evening of July 19, the foregoing proved to be unfounded, but news of a more startling nature greeted us, inasmuch as it appeared that the natives of our own soil were developing a state of inquietude which led the whites to anticipate a rupture within a few months.

Satisfied as to the impending danger threatening the settlers, and being in need of provisions and ammunition, Captain Starrett, with the ship under his command, repaired to the California navy yard for supplies, having obtained which, he returned to his station, and the afternoon of October 4, 1855, found the "Decatur" at anchor in Duwam-sh Bay, near the town of Seattle, with the following-named officers comprising her roster, viz.: Commander Isaac S. Sterrett, commanding; Lieutenants, Edward Middleton, Andrew J. Drake, Aaron K. Hughes, and Thomas S. Phelps, Navigator; Passed Midshipman Francis G. Dallas, Acting Master; Passed Assistant Surgeon, Richard W. Jeffery; Assistant Surgeon, John Y. Taylor; Purser, John I. Jones; Passed Mid-

shipman, George M. Morris; Gunner, Robert M. Stocking; Carpenter, Joseph Miller; Sailmaker, Augustus A. Warren; Captain's Clerk, James S. Starrett.

When in California the ship was delayed a few days in San Francisco, and while there an apparently trifling circumstance occurred, seemingly not worthy of a second thought; but for the important bearing it had upon the future of Port Townsend I am induced to relate it, as a possible warning to others of a kindred nature who may be disposed to try a similar experiment.

One morning a committee of prominent merchants came on board, and stated to the captain their desire to establish a whaling station at some point nearer the whaling grounds of the Arctic than San Francisco, and had settled upon Port Townsend as the place, and only waited for his opinion, *pro* or *con.*, to decide the matter. In reply, Captain Starrett, who, by the way, was favorably impressed with the place selected, urged the undertaking with all the eloquence of which he was master, and to which the gentlemen responded, "That settles it; we will establish it at once." As they were about leaving, the chairman queried, "By the by, captain, how about provisions? Are the prices reasonable?" The captain answered by handing them his market book, remarking, "You can see for yourselves, gentlemen, what they charged me and my ship's company." After carefully scrutinizing every item to the last one recorded, they threw down the book, and with much apparent feeling exclaimed, "We thought the cost of provisions and stores in this city was high enough, and for that reason we desired to go where they were more moderate, but this is beyond all conception. We do not believe that Port Townsend will become a whaling depot just yet." Thus the greed of a few unscrupulous men, in their efforts to take advantage of the people sent to protect their lives and property, decided the immediate fortunes of one of the finest harbors on the continent.

The "Decatur" was only a few hours in port before we had a fair understanding of existing affairs. During the interval between that ship's departure in July and her return the passive attitude of the Indians had changed to an active one. The Klikitat and Spokane Indians first united with hostile intentions, and soon were joined by the Palouses, Walla-Walla, Yakami, Kamialk, Nisqually, Puyallup, Lake, and other tribes, estimated at six thousand warriors, marshaled under the three generals-in-chief Co-

quilton,* Owhi, and Lushi, assisted by many subordinate chiefs. Envoys were dispatched across the sound to the country bordering on the Strait of Fuca to enlist the services of the Classet and Clallum Indians, but, fortunately for their future, the wise counsels of the Duke of York, the Clallum chief, prevailed on the side of peace and neutrality.

In the valley watered by the Snoqualmie River resided an important tribe, whose alliance the belligerents eagerly sought, and for two months success seemed evenly balanced, but policy at last decided in favor of the whites, and of all the tribes in the Territory the Snoqualmie Indians alone drew the sword in favor of the enemies of their race, notwithstanding Pat Kanim, their chief, most cordially abominated the "Bostons," and unhesitatingly proclaimed his desire for their destruction.†

But possessing a large fund of common sense, and traits seldom found in the Indian character, and rising above prejudice and hatred, he subordinated personal enmity to the good of his people, for whose welfare he held himself responsible, and being conscious that, however disastrous the war might prove to the settlers, the "Bostons," who were "like the trees in the forests," would recuperate and sweep them from the earth; and while he would gladly exterminate them, root and branch, policy dictated prudence, and to save his people from final destruction he accepted in good faith the proffered alliance.

The rancor existing in the heart of this savage was caused by inhuman treatment, perpetrated during his childhood by certain whites at Nisqually, against himself, father, and brother, in retaliation for a murder subsequently proved to have been committed by a white renegade. After enduring torture in a thousand ways for eighteen months, they were released, but the bitter feelings engendered by this cruelty never slumbered, and, as before mentioned, "policy" alone prevented his retaliating whenever objects for his vengeance could be found.

Excepting the three tribes mentioned, and a few of the Duwam-sh race residing in and around Seattle, the entire body of Indians in the Territory were united against the colonists, who were poor, without military resources save a few rifles and old

*Many of the names in this article are Indian. Lieut. Phelps undoubtedly gave them as nearly as he could with the English language. Thus Lushi is now spelled, authoritatively, as Leschi; but no white man's lingual organs ever reproduced many of the gutturals emitted by the Coast Indians.

†A. A. Denny, Rev. David E. Blaine and other pioneers give Kanim a very different reputation.

fowling-pieces, and, beyond themselves, their only hope rested upon the two companies of the Third U. S. Artillery, acting as infantry, commanded by Captain E. D. Keyes, U. S. A., and stationed at Fort Steilacoom, situated about a mile east of the town bearing that name. Unfortunately, at this time their prospects of assistance were lessened by the absence of one company, under Lieutenant Slaughter, upon a reconnoitring expedition to the Naches Pass, and of whose safety serious doubts were entertained. Various extravagant rumors were in circulation, and the minds of the people naturally became unsettled and prepared to credit any report, however marvelous, and when, about October 1, a man by the name of Porter was attacked by a few Indians (but who succeeded in escaping to Steilacoom), a panic was created.

The farmers of King County abandoned their homes and fled with their families to Seattle, where, uniting with the townspeople, they lost no time in constructing a block-house on the mound, of sufficient capacity to protect them against the incursion of the savage horde momentarily expected; and at this juncture, when all hope of assistance from the outside world was given up, the appearance of the "Decatur" rounding West Point was such an unexpected acquisition of good fortune to the anxious and despondent settlers that they seemed to feel as if a reprieve from sudden death had been granted, and the transition from despair to unrestrained joy may be imagined but not described. A few days completed the block-house, and with ample protection at hand a sense of security reigned to which this community had long been a stranger; and when, on October 18, Acting Governor Mason arrived from an observation tour towards the mountains, reporting a pacific condition of the country, the panic disappeared, and the farmers gradually returned to their homesteads to secure the crops ready for harvesting.

From this period, notwithstanding the pacific news brought by Governor Mason, the excitement revived; conflicting rumors multiplied, and to separate truth from fiction taxed the ingenuity of all who attempted it; but after an experience of two or three months the officers of the "Decatur" became satisfied that no information from any source could be relied upon excepting that furnished by Jim (Yark-eke-e-man) through Dr. Williamson, which in time was received with implicit confidence. The uneasiness of the people became sensibly increased on the morning

of October 15 by the arrival of Surveyor-General James Tilton, on the part of the acting governor, to solicit a loan of muskets and ammunition to enable the citizens of Olympia to arm against an apprehended attack. As the danger appeared imminent, the ship was nearly denuded of small-arms in order to satisfy the demand.

On the 18th the alarm of the citizens was seriously augmented by the arrival from Fort Colville of six Frenchmen, who were positive of the union of the Klikitat, Spokane, Palouse, Walla-Walla, and Yakima Indians for hostile purposes, and had been assured by the chief of the latter tribe that on October 6 he had attacked and destroyed a company of soldiers, thereby securing a good supply of arms and ammunition, enabling him to assume the offensive and also to secure all the mountain passes and rivers.

This probably was the Indian version of a report received through another channel the next day that on the 6th Major Hal-ler's command had charged and routed a body of Indians, with severe loss on both sides, the soldiers remaining in possession of the field.

Following this came the news of Lieutenant Slaughter's return from the mountains, where, finding the enemy numbering between three and four thousand, he deemed it expedient to fall back, first to White River, and afterwards to Fort Steilacoom.

These and other kindred stories served as a prelude to the tragedy enacted at the Pup-shulk Prairie on Sunday morning, October 28, when, at eight o'clock, the savages surprised and murdered three families recently returned to their homes.

This band of Indians was led by the chiefs Nelson, a Pup-shulk, Kun-ash-kelt, and Si-am-hum, the latter a medicine-man, noted for his cruel disposition, who had, by covering his person with knife and bullet wounds, impressed his brethren with the belief of his bearing a charmed life.

The horrors of this morning can never be revealed, and very little, other than conjecture, is known, for of the two adult survivors, both of whom were wounded in the instant of attack, one crawled away and hid in the woods, and the other, a young man named "Joe Lake," remembered little beyond a crash of arms, a sharp twinge in the shoulder, a torn coat, and his arrival at Seattle about 4 P. M.; and the only information we have was given by a child aged seven years.

About 10 o'clock A. M. on the 29th a canoe was seen coming from Duwam-sh River, which, on being intercepted by a boat from the "Decatur," was found to contain an Indian and three children, the latter suffering from cold, hunger, and neglect. The eldest, a bright boy named John Icelius King, seven years old on the previous day, with an intelligence beyond his years, informed his listeners that on the previous morning, about eight o'clock, while playing in the yard with the other children, his step-father, a Mr. Jones, at that time being in the house, and his mother in the pantry adjoining, the Indians stealthily approached and instantly killed Mr. Jones, while his mother, endeavoring to regain the house on her hands and knees, was discovered and also shot, and as she fell she called to her oldest boy and urged him to try and save his brother and sister and take them to Seattle.

At this moment the Indians appeared intent upon their destruction, when one of their leaders, known as Nelson, a Pupshulk chief, drove them back, and, seizing the children, forced them into the bushes, with the injunction to "run away and hide."

Raising the little boy, who was only two years old, in his arms, and taking the girl, aged four, by the hand, the little fellow set out for Seattle, twenty-five miles away, and after managing to overcome a distance of about five miles they fortunately discovered a camp of friendly Indians, who welcomed them to their tent, and after making known to them their distressed condition a young man called "Wash Tom" immediately embarked the little waifs in his canoe and started down the river for a place of safety.

The night was thus far the coldest of the season, and Tom, on discovering the sufferings of his passengers, wrapped his own blanket around and generously gave them his entire stock of provisions, consisting of three or four cold potatoes, and the little hero naively said that he "kept awake all night to keep the children warm."

The journey was void of adventure, and, as already stated, ten o'clock on the morning succeeding the disaster found them on board the "Decatur."

The foregoing is all the positive information we have of this bloody event, though much supposititious evidence was gathered a day or two later from an inspection of the scene of butchery. During the afternoon of the 29th a company of fifty-five volun-

teers, under the command of Captain Hewett, were landed at the mouth of the Duwam-sh River to scour the country and bring in settlers. The party returned on the 2d of November, having found and interred the remains of eight people, namely: Mr. and Mrs. King, Mr. and Mrs. Jones, Mr. and Mrs. Brannan, Mr. Cooper, and one other man, name unknown.

All of the bodies were horribly mangled, and in the case of Mr. Brannan evidences of a desperate resistance were apparent, the ground being torn up, handfuls of hair and fragments of clothing scattered around, and his body completely riddled with knife wounds, while his wife was stabbed through the breast, and her body, with an infant clasped in her arms, was thrown head-foremost into a well.

Certain prominent Indians declared that these murders were caused by the whites arresting and holding in prison Lushi, the chief of the Quai-a-malt tribe, at the head of White River, but as he was known to be at liberty a few days later the story was not credited, but was supposed to have been circulated in order to draw attention from the real object of the uprising.

Kakum, a Lake chief, married to a Snoqualmie wife, had much to say on the subject, but as his statement could not be substantiated no confidence was placed in it.

The farmers having returned to Seattle, and that place holding about one hundred able-bodied men, to a certain extent the ship was left free to attend to the interests of other places on the sound, and having garrisoned the block-house with a guard of marines under Lieutenant Drake, she sailed on November 20 for Steilacoom, where the people were much excited over a party of some thirty Northern Indians encamped to the southward of the town. Lieutenant Hughes was dispatched with the first cutter to investigate the trouble, and as he landed and was advancing towards them, the Indians, wrought to a high pitch of anger by the townsmen, and not comprehending the object of the visit, covered him with their guns and ordered him back, but Hughes, undaunted, pushed onward, and as the Indians were on the point of firing, the squaws, fortunately remaining cool, seized and pressed the muzzles of the rifles down, and by their presence of mind saved the officer's life and their entire band from annihilation. An amicable conversation followed, which resulted in the Indians leaving immediately for Vancouver's Island.

At the fort Captain Keyes was organizing another expedition for the field, to be commanded by Lieutenant Slaughter, and being short of officers, Master Dallas was assigned temporarily as aide to Captain Keyes, and Dr. Taylor as surgeon, and Lieutenant Harrison, of the revenue cutter "Jefferson Davis," as first lieutenant to Slaughter's command, which in a few days left for the Muckle-shute Prairie, and from that point to carefully examine the White River country through to the head of Duwam-sh Bay.

On the 1st day of December, while meditating a visit to Nisqually and Olympia, alarming news from Seattle came by express, and the ship immediately repaired to that place, when an urgent request was received from Port Madison for the vessel to "come immediately and save the people from a band of Northern Indians who were threatening the lives of the entire settlement." In a few hours the ship was in that harbor, and Captain Sterrett, believing in the possible settlement of a probable misunderstanding by a conference, requested the principal men to assemble on board for that purpose; but the Indians, doubting the propriety of subjecting their persons to the tender mercies of the "Bostons" without proper guarantees, which Captain Sterrett declined to give, sent a decided negative, but after many promises and much persuasion he succeeded in gathering a deliberative board of the savages, composed of Scowell, the most powerful chief in all the Territories of Northwestern America, and eighteen minor chiefs, or Tyees, and after giving them an exhibition of the power of heavy guns, the explosive nature of iron shells, and destructive qualities of grape and canister, he explained the situation, the excited state of the settlers, and in the war already inaugurated the impossibility of distinguishing friends from foes, and concluded by urging them to return to their own country and remain there until the close of hostilities; to which Scowell immediately responded, "In eighteen hours we will leave, and not return till the war is over." Within twelve hours the entire encampment had departed from the waters of Puget Sound.

The object of the trip being satisfactorily concluded, and the state of affairs at Seattle rendering imperative the ship's immediate return, preparation was made to leave, when a canoe arrived from the latter place bringing news of the disaster which had befallen the command of Lieutenant Slaughter near the forks of White and Green Rivers, requiring notice at this time.

The march of the expedition after leaving Steilacoom to Muckle-shute was devoid of interest, and after a brief rest at that prairie proceeded down the valley of White River, every precaution being taken against surprise, and notwithstanding the constant fall of rain, neither tents nor fires were permitted until their arrival at the Pup-shulk Prairie, near the forks, where, on December 4, meeting with Captain Hewett, and being assured by that officer of the absence of Indians, his company having thoroughly scoured the neighborhood during the day, Lieutenant Slaughter ordered his men to encamp for the night. Tents were erected, fires kindled, and for the first time in three days the tired and drenched command enjoyed rest and dry clothing.

A deserted log hut was found on the ground, which the officers appropriated for headquarters, and with a rousing fire before the door, made themselves as comfortable as the circumstances would admit. About 10 o'clock P. M., while Lieutenant Slaughter and Captain Hewett were conversing together inside the hut, and exposed to the open door, with Dr. Taylor and Lieutenant Harrison also in the room, the Indians, who had passed the sentinels unperceived, poured a heavy volley into the encampment, instantly killing Lieutenant Slaughter and wounding others. The awakened garrison were quickly in position, and a fierce fusillade was kept up on both sides until towards dawn, when the Indians retired, leaving on the ground Lieutenant Slaughter, Corporal Berry, and one private of the army, and Corporal Langden, Washington Territory Volunteers, killed, and five men wounded. The intense darkness of the night probably saved the command from annihilation. On December 6 the expedition, with the remains of Lieutenant Slaughter, arrived at Seattle, and returned to Fort Steilacoom by water.

Subsequently it transpired that during the two days and nights previous to the arrival of the command at the forks it had been constantly surrounded by a band of Indians capable of mastering it at any moment, but owing to the inability of the chiefs to distinguish the officers, they preferred to wait until they could be sure of them, believing that without a head the soldiers would become demoralized and yield without a struggle.

On the morning of December 7 the "Decatur," with William Webster, pilot, in charge, weighed anchor, and while working to the southward against a light head wind, and at about high

water, at 2 P. M., being close in with Bainbridge Island, struck upon a rocky reef making in a southeasterly direction from the land, a danger of which the pilot was entirely ignorant. A sharp point penetrated the keel and held the ship against every attempt to back her off, and by the time an anchor could be carried out and the heavy guns run aft, the tide had fallen sufficiently to render futile every effort to move her. The rise and fall of the tide was between thirteen and fourteen feet, and as it subsided the ship canted rankly to starboard, and appeared to be held at a point about ten feet abaft the foremast. About 5 o'clock P. M. a loud, sharp report was heard, accompanied with a severe trembling of the vessel, and an examination for the cause revealed the fact of her starboard bilge bearing upon a sharp ridge of a ledge, with the side, from the keel up, being stove in; the main rail, between the fore and mainmasts, arched nearly two feet, and the seams opened an inch or more. At low tide the ship rested as follows, viz.: the stem on the bottom, where there was only three feet of water, the bilge under the after part of the fore-channels on a sharp, rocky ridge, and the keel upheld by the pointed rock before mentioned.

Thus she was sustained at two points, the stern and bilge, with the forefoot elevated about five feet above the sand. Had she gone ten feet farther, the ship would have been evenly balanced in the air at low water. The open seams were calked with blankets, and every preparation made to float her at high water. About six o'clock the next morning, during a moderate squall, the ship backed off, and soon, under a press of canvas, was beating back to Seattle, where, after a vexatious passage, contending against head winds and calms, she arrived in thirty hours.

On the 10th of December the command of the "Decatur" was transferred to Commander Guert Gansevoort, U. S. N., Captain Sterrett having been placed on the reserve list of the navy by the action of the retiring board of 1855, in consequence of false charges having been preferred and the defendant adjudged guilty without a hearing. Subsequently, however, he was triumphantly vindicated before a proper tribunal, and one of the most genial and efficient officers of the navy was restored to the active list. As a seaman, he had no superior in or out of the service. The ship was now taken to Yesler's wharf, the topmast and yards sent on shore, hold broken out, battery removed to the wharf,

and at high water hauled as far up on the shore as it was possible to get her, so that when the tide was at its lowest ebb she was nearly "high and dry." An examination showed the keel, keelson, and side, up to the water-line, to be badly broken, the latter stove in, and the starboard side, from bridle-port to mainmast, and rail to keel, frame-knees, lining, and outside planking, excepting an inch of the outer surface, completely dry-rotted.

The carpenter's crew immediately commenced the repairs by jacking the side into place, filling in with new wood; bracing with strong timbers, calking, felting, and sheathing the outside; working day and night till the 19th of January, when the battery was remounted, and the ship once more rode to her anchor, where she could command nearly every part of the town with her guns.

During the twenty days the ship lay on the beach undergoing repairs many incidents worthy of notice occurred, among which the following may be considered the most interesting. Early in the month, Lushi, eluding the watch of Steilacoom, gained the reservation near that town, and while endeavoring to corrupt the Indians there notice of his presence was conveyed to Captain Keyes, who immediately dispatched Captain Maloney and company in the Hudson Bay steamer "Beaver," kindly loaned for the purpose, to secure the person of that chief for further disposal; but as the "Beaver" approached the encampment, Lushi and his warriors were in battle array, awaiting their arrival, but having no cannon, or facilities for landing, beyond a small boat capable of holding only three or four persons, Captain Maloney was obliged to return and report the failure of his mission; whereupon Captain Keyes embarked in the "Active" for Seattle, to borrow the launch and howitzer of the "Decatur," but they being indispensable for the protection of that place, Captain Gansevoort declined to let them go out of the bay.

The "Active" then steamed away for Steilacoom, where she arrived about midnight of January 6. In the meanwhile, alarmed for his safety, and divining the object of the "Active's" absence, Lushi quietly returned to the Puyallup River, capturing two white men on his way and carrying them prisoners to his camp.

About ten o'clock on the evening of January 18 the town was thrown into a commotion by the discharge of a musket, apparently near the outskirts in rear of the mound.

The "Decatur's" crew, who were organized in four divisions,

with a howitzer's crew in addition, sprang to arms, repaired to the stations assigned in the event of a surprise, manned the guns mounted to sweep the wharf, and awaited further developments, while the women, children, and others, sought refuge in the block-house.

No further disturbance occurring, an armed guard was detailed to ascertain the origin of the firing, and while passing the house occupied by Miss Holgate, one of their number stumbled over the dead body of a man, which, on being carried to the front, proved to be that of John Drew, a deserter from the "Decatur."

An investigation established the following: that Drew, in attempting to enter the house through a window, made his presence known by the noise created in raising the sash; and while Miss Holgate "(afterward Mrs. Carr)" was endeavoring to keep him out by holding it down, and screaming for help, her brother, a lad of thirteen, came to her rescue with a small fowling-piece and shot the man in the head, who, on receiving the charge in the face, below the eye, fell dead.

The company of volunteers formed the preceding November having disbanded early in January, a new organization was soon after created, with Messrs. Hewett and Peixotto for its officers, and now occupied a post of observation near the head of the Duwam-sh, while the waters of the bay and inlet were actively patrolled by the launch under my charge. Meanwhile, the coast survey steamer "Active" arrived, with the following officers attached, viz.: Lieutenant James Alden, U.S.N., commanding; Lieutenants Thomas G. Corbin, Simeon S. Bassett, and Philip C. Johnson; Assistant Surgeon John M. Brown, and Engineers N. C. Davis and M. P. Jordan. This vessel having volunteered for service in the war, was assigned to duty principally in the head-waters of the sound, where she immediately repaired, and was efficiently employed.

About the 21st of January "Jim" notified Captain Gansevoort of the Indians having crossed the mountains, and on being joined by the warriors west of the Cascades, had formed in two columns, under Coquilton and Owhi, to attack simultaneously Seattle and Steilacoom, which, with their overwhelming forces, they hoped to carry, and then pursue their bloody work until not a white inhabitant was left alive in the Territory; but when on the eve of executing these plans Coquilton was instructed by a scout that

the "Boston war-ship," then aground in Duwam-sh Bay, had her hold full of powder, and to an enterprising chief like himself would become an easy prey; whereupon he had recalled Owhi, and with the united columns was marching upon Seattle to secure the prize providentially placed within his reach; and that secured, the Territory, he reasoned, would be at his mercy, and its final conquest only a matter of time.

"Jim" was unable to estimate the probable number of Indians marshaled under Coquilton, but his informant enumerated them at *hi-hi-hiu*, signifying an immense throng.* For some unaccountable reason this information fell upon the ears of an apathetic populace, who regarded it as the idle vapping of an irresponsible savage too contemptible to notice; but the officers of the "Decatur," relying upon one whose word they had learned to trust, bent every energy in preparing to dispute with the wily foe for the possession of Seattle. The work on the ship was pursued with unremitting vigor until she floated, all ataunto, in the stream. The divisions, skilled in the exercises of battle, nightly occupied the shore, vigilantly guarding the people as they slept, and resting only when the morning light released them from the apprehended attack. The divisions, commanded by their respective officers, were distributed along the line of defense in the following order: The fourth, under Lieutenant Dallas, commencing at Southeast Point, extended along the bay shore to the sand-bar, where, meeting with the right of the first division, Lieutenant Drake, the latter continued the line facing the swamp to a point half-way from the bar to a hotel situated midway between the bar and Yesler's place, and there joined the second, under Lieutenant Hughes, whose left, resting on the hotel, completed an unbroken line between the latter and Southeast Point, while the howitzer's crew, Lieutenant Morris, was stationed near Plummer's house, to sweep the bar and to operate wherever circumstances demanded. The third division, Lieutenant Phelps, occupied that portion of the neck lying between the swamp and mound east of Yesler's place, to secure the approaches leading from the lake, and the marines, under Sergeant Carbine, garrisoned the block-house.

The divisions, thus stationed, left a gap between the second

*"Hiu"—a large number; a quantity; "H-i-u," long drawn out and accent on last letter rather than repeating the first two letters.

and third, which the width and impassable nature of the swamp at this place rendered unnecessary to close, thereby enabling a portion of the town to be encompassed which otherwise would have been exposed.

The distance between the block-house and Southeast Point, following the sinuosities of the bay and swamp shores, was three-quarters of a mile, to be defended by ninety-six men, eighteen marines, and five officers, leaving Gunner Stocking, Carpenter Miller, Clerks Francis and Ferguson, and fifteen men with Lieutenant Middleton, to guard the ship. Surgeons Jeffrey and Taylor, Purser Jones, and Sail-maker Warren composed the staff of the commanding officer, and did good service on shore. Of the entire ship's company, numbering one hundred and forty-five, officers and crew, only one, Hans Carl, an old seaman in the last stage of decline, was unable to answer when the muster-roll was called.

The evening of January 22d witnessed the disbanding of Captain Hewett's company of volunteers, because these worthies declared "they would not serve longer while there was a ship in port to protect them;" and a more reckless, undisciplined set of men has seldom been let loose to prey upon any community than these eighty embryo soldiers upon Seattle. Efforts were made to utilize this material, but with indifferent success, until after much rough argument about thirty of their number became partially convinced that their individual safety depended upon unity of action under a competent leader, and they finally consented to form a company, provided Mr. Peixotto would consent to serve as captain. That gentleman accepted the honor, and on being furnished with arms and mustered in, they were assigned to the unoccupied space between the second and third divisions, with instructions to be wakeful and watchful, and on no account to leave their posts without permission.

At 9 P. M. these volunteers were sent to their stations, and at ten o'clock, when the officer went his rounds, every soul of them had gone home to bed, leaving their guns behind to represent them, and Captain Peixotto, in disgust, threw up his commission, and, volunteering, was delegated to duty with the third division.

On the 24th the "Active" came into the harbor, bearing Governor Stevens and staff, accompanied by Captain Keyes and Indian Agent Simmons.

The governor, recently returned from visiting the Cœur d'Alenes and other transmountain tribes, scoffed at the idea of Indian troubles, and on the evening of the 25th concluded a speech addressed to the settlers with these emphatic words: "I have just returned from the countries of the Nez Percés and of the Cœur d'Alenes; I have visited many tribes on the way, both going and coming, and I tell you there are not fifty hostile Indians in the Territory, and I believe that the cities of New York and San Francisco will as soon be attacked by Indians as this town of Seattle." The effect of this declaration upon his hearers was disheartening in the extreme, for within an hour before their utterance intelligence had been received that "Coquilton, with his army, was approaching by the way of Lake Duwamish, and had been crossing since early in the morning;" and many then resolved to leave the country, which they afterwards did, causing much annoyance to the governor, who attributed their defection to the "improper influence of the officers of the 'Decatur.'" Immediately upon closing, the gubernatorial party re-embarked, and continued their inspecting tour of the reservations in the lower waters of the inlet.

Owing to a singular idiosyncrasy on the part of the people residing in the upper regions of the sound, only a few, apparently, believed in the danger near at hand, and laughed to scorn the "officers of the ship at Seattle" for their absurd apprehensions of any difficulty with a race too cowardly to resist any aggressions, however serious they might be.

During the afternoon of the 25th, Tecumseh "(so named by A. A. Denny in 1851)," chief of the Lake Indians, came in with his whole tribe and claimed protection against the hostiles, who designed their destruction in consequence of their adhering to the whites, and they were assigned to a portion of the unoccupied ground in the southern portion of the town, with the injunction to keep within their camp and not to stray beyond its bounds.

The protestations of these Indians were received in good faith, and an asylum cheerfully accorded; how well deserved the following pages will show.

The night of January 25 set in heavily overcast and misty, while the weather was absolutely calm, admirable for detecting the stealthy approach of the savage enemy, but uncomfortable for the patient watchers, upon whose sensitive ears the slightest sound

broke with startling clearness; and many nights of this harassing disquietude were the "Decatur's" men destined to endure in the coming months before the end was reached. At five o'clock in the afternoon the divisions repaired to their allotted station on the shore, every man a sentry, and not a sound above a whisper could be heard along the entire line, while the officers noiselessly kept ward over every part of their commands; and if we except a few refractory ex-volunteers on the Sawdust, and the occasional barking of dogs, almost perfect quietude rested upon the town.

At eight o'clock two Indians, closely wrapped in their blankets, sauntered slowly by, apparently from the Duwam-sh encampment on the southern slope of the mound, and when a pace or so away I suddenly stepped before them and in "Chinook" demanded their names, and business abroad at that hour of the night, to which, unconcernedly, they replied, "Lake tillicum, and we have been to visit Curley."

A careful scrutiny of their features satisfied me of their being strangers, and, accepting their explanation, I remanded them to their camp, with an admonition to "keep within bounds, otherwise they would be shot."

Giving a grunt of satisfaction, they rapidly disappeared in the darkness towards the south end of the town, and the *lieutenant-generals of Coquilton's army, the high chiefs Owhi, a Klikitat, and Lushi, a Qui-a-mault, passed unmolested into the camp of friendly Indians located in the center of our lines.*

Within an hour after my rencontre with these Indians an admirable imitation of an owl's hooting was heard directly in my front, which immediately afterwards received responsive hoots from both right and left; and on making known my impression of the enemy's proximity, Curley was dispatched into the wilderness to collect such information as he might be able to gather without undue risks to himself. Returning two hours later, he reported "no Indians present in the woods, and an attack during the ensuing hours of that night an impossibility;" and complaining of fatigue, signified his intention of seeking the repose of which he was in immediate need.

Headquarters had been established at Mr. Yesler's house, and while there, observing Curley during the narration of his night tramp in the woods, a marked change from his usual manner struck me unpleasantly, and induced an impression that perhaps

he had passed beyond the pale of being further trusted; why, I was unable to answer to myself, but suspicion warned me that his visit to the forest had resulted in a way quite at variance with the statement he had somewhat insolently made; and on his reaching the Sawdust I was not far behind, determined that no hooting owl should draw him beyond the lines again that night. When out alone in the dark, as Curley apparently believed himself to be, he set out with rapid steps toward his own encampment, muttering and gesticulating wildly, and, when a dozen paces or more away, suddenly stopped, and, stamping violently on the ground, turned and swiftly vanished in the direction taken by the two Indians three hours before. Pondering over these matters, the night quietly passed away, and while the vigilant sentinels were mindful of the foe in front, they little dreamed of the treachery being enacted in their rear.

At midnight, commencing January 26, Tecumseh, Owhi, Lushi, Curley, Yark-ek-e-man, and chiefs of lesser note, were assembled in the lodge of the former to decide upon a plan of battle and the necessary details to harmonize the movements of the Indians both in and out of the town. Preliminary to more important business, the council decided upon an indiscriminate slaughter of all the people found in Seattle, including those belonging to the ship. Curley requested an exemption in favor of Mr. Yesler—always a kind friend to his race—but being overruled, finally consented that he also should be consigned to destruction with the others. Next, after serious deliberation, they decided that their stranger guests should immediately return to Coquilton by water, and arrange for a simultaneous assault of all the forces under his command; the Indians within the town to provide against a retreat in the direction of the bay, and thus insure the destruction of both people and town, and secure a retreat to the forests before the heavy guns of the ship would be able to open fire; the attack to be made about 2 o'clock A. M., instead of the hour immediately preceding dawn, as is usual with the Indians; and the inadequate garrison, being taken by surprise, would, they argued, offer only a feeble resistance to the overwhelming number of determined Indians launched suddenly upon them, and an easy victory be gained with little loss to themselves.

Having satisfactorily completed the programme for offensive operations, the two chiefs were on the eve of embarking in a

canoe waiting for them on the beach, when Yark-eke-e-man, who had some time previously been accused by the Indians of being too friendly with their enemies, and who was not wholly free from the ban of suspicion, now became painfully conscious of his inability to give timely warning of the intended movement, and instantly conceived a way of defeating their well-disguised plans, while at the same time he would be enabled to notify those interested in the measures inaugurated for their destruction; and while apparently assenting to every proposition decided in the affirmative, he boldly opposed the method of execution, and counseled the chiefs not to attempt to leave in the manner suggested, for the men guarding the shore would certainly discover and shoot them, "and your death or capture at this juncture," said he, "will defeat the objects we have in view; but rest quiet until morning, and as soon as the crew return to the vessel you can walk out over the bar, mistaken for Lake Indians; besides, the 'Bostons' are anticipating a night attack, and prepared to resist any assault you may make; and if you should succeed, which is doubtful, it will be at the cost of a fearful loss of life; but wait," he added, "until ten o'clock, when the 'Decatur's' men will have breakfasted and gone to sleep; then be prepared to attack with your whole force, leaving the avenues of retreat to the care of the Indians in town, and, when ready, overwhelm the place with every warrior in your army, and before the guns of the ship can interfere every inhabitant will be dead, their dwellings given to the flames, and your people back in safety to the woods.

"Now mass your forces in ambush near the brow of the first range of hills, leaving a few exposed in front, and as the 'Decatur's' men land, mistaking them for the main body, they will charge, and drive the flying Indians up the hill, and on their reaching your line give them the contents of your guns, and let clubbed muskets and knives do the rest; not a soul can escape, and with canoes the ship will be easily overpowered, and she, together with her ammunition and provisions, will be yours."

This scheme proved too grand in the prospects advanced, and by far too brilliant in its anticipated results, not to find a ready response in every Indian's heart, and without modification the council unanimously voted to substitute it for the original one planned a short time before.

At seven o'clock, as the divisions were moving on board, two

Indians were seen passing out over the sand-bar towards Tom Pepper's house, situated on the edge of the woods, near the junction of the bar with the beach.

Eleven hours before those Indians had stood face to face with me on the Sawdust, and now, as I stood watching them disappear from my view in the guise of Lake Indians searching for food, little did I imagine that, with a favoring fortune, they held the destinies of Washington in their hands.

Soon after the departure of the envoy chiefs, "Jim," eluding the vigilance of Curley, succeeded in gaining the back-room of Dr. Williamson's house, and scarcely had time to signify his desire for an immediate interview, before Curley stalked in from the street and insolently demanded to know what had become of "Jim," when, placing his hand on the intruder, the doctor violently thrust him through the door and turned the key; and a few moments placed that gentleman in possession of the occurrences in the Indian camp, and no sooner had its vital import been grasped than he dispatched messengers to Mr. Yesler, urging him, without a moment's delay, to notify Captain Gansevoort of the presence of the Indians and the imminence of an immediate attack, with which demand that gentleman quickly complied.

Meanwhile the "Decatur's" people had gotten themselves ready to partake of their morning meal, and were on the eve of satisfying their appetites, rendered keen by a night's vigils, when the long-roll summoned them to the deck, and ten minutes later found them, breakfastless, under arms at the stations vacated by them a short time before.

The third division was the last in order to leave the ship, and the captain accompanied it to the shore, where the non-combatants of the friendly tribes were hurrying their chattels into canoes and pushing out into the bay.

Ki-cu-mu-low (Nancy), Curley's sister, and mother of Yark-ke-e-man, short, stout, and incapable of running, apparently crazed with fright, came waddling past us, and to my query of "What's the matter?" Nancy, pointing one hand towards the forest, while using the other to accelerate her speech, she shrieked back, "*Hi-u Kliktat copā Tom Pepper's house! hi-hi hiu Kliktat!*"* and, before completing the sentence, plunged headforemost

*An immense number of Kliktats near Tom Pepper's house.

into a canoe, and when last seen was vigorously paddling towards the inlet.

"They are undoubtedly here at last," I remarked to the captain, "but probably will not show themselves till night."

"No," he replied; "but get your men under cover and to sleep, so they can be rested and ready when the Indians appear, and I will have their meals sent to them on shore; first, however, I will go to the south end and have the howitzer lodge a shell in Tom Pepper's house to see if they are there."

Placing the command in Mr. Yesler's loft, with instructions to keep their rifles by their sides, ready to jump to their stations in the event of trouble, and while awaiting the result of the howitzer's fire, some fifteen or twenty worthies of the delinquent volunteers, who deserted their posts on the 22d, assembled around the building, determined to keep the men from sleeping, and, unmindful of polite requests to go away and leave them undisturbed, they finally resolved at all hazards to enter, regardless of consequences to the sentry, and while dashing towards the entrance, with loud threats of injury to the latter, I ordered him to use his rifle on the first man who should attempt to pass or molest him, when they came to a halt, and, retreating to a distance of twenty paces or more, poured upon me a torrent of the vilest abuse their tongues could frame, accompanied with such oaths and curses as would have shamed the Dutch in Flanders, and when at the height of their abominable execrations the howitzer rang loud and clear, coincident with the heavy boom of a gun on the ship throwing a shell over our heads, instantly followed by a fearful crash of musketry from the entire rear of the town, while a tempest of bullets swept through the village in unison with the deafening yells of more than a thousand savages; and as we sprang forward to our places in the line I was conscious of a sudden cessation of their vituperations and of a rushing sound of fleeing bodies, thickly veiled in clouds of dust, swiftly vanishing towards the block-house on the mound, or, perhaps, more aptly described afterwards by Dr. Williamson, who witnessed the transaction: "Those men ran, sir, as men never ran before; they ran so that the very bones in their legs bent under them, and you couldn't see them for the dust they raised behind them." However that may be, they safely reached the block-house, where Sergeant Carbine several times charged them out of one door, to return as often

by the other, till, wearying of the trouble, he left them to cower behind the wooden bulwarks, protected from the bullets of the foe.

The third division, while dashing forward to the rendezvous, caught sight of the Indians massed in the Lake trail, and, contrary to orders, charged and drove them to the ridge of the hill before they could be arrested and turned back, and the ambushed Indians, too much astonished at the unexpected retreat to improve the critical moment, suffered their enemies to regain their stations unmolested, when the latter, finding a few sapling-stumps for rifle-rests, soon cooled down to their work, while their disappointed foes vainly endeavored to regain the ground they had lost.

The costumes of the officers and men being similar, the puzzled Indians were unable to distinguish one from the other, but the initial movement revealing to them the officer in charge of that command, rendered his position an unenviable one during the next five hours of the fight.

Early in the action, Klakum, secreted in easy range, behind a tree, observing Mr. Peixotto standing on the block-house steps, with young Holgate two or three steps above, and immediately behind, carefully leveled his rifle at the former and fired; the ball, missing its mark, penetrated the brain of the latter, and the poor boy fell backward, dead, upon the floor.

Within an hour after this sad event Hans Carl, the invalided sailor of the "Decatur," quietly breathed his last, and his nurse, a colored boy belonging to the ship, came to the front, and, upon his reporting the circumstances, I inquired why he had left the body uncared for, to which he replied, "I can't see no good watching dead man when Injuns is round; he ought to look out for his own self when fightin's goin' on, and 'stead watchin' dead body I want to do some of it myself, sah!" The excuse was deemed sufficient, and his conduct, under the circumstances, warranted. A rifle was placed in his hands, a position in the line given him, and a braver man never endured an Indian fire in battle.

Leaving the third division and marines to hold the Indians in check at the head of the swamp, we turn to the south end of the peninsula, where, the contestants being separated by the slough, the battle assumed the nature of a long-range duel, where large numbers were engaged, and neither party could approach

the other without incurring certain destruction, and any attempt at crossing by the sand-bar would have resulted in instant death to any one foolhardy enough to undertake it. The Indians possessed the advantage of position, overwhelming numbers, and in being screened by trees, logs, and bushes, while the whites in the field south of the neck, including citizens who came forward to assist in protecting their families and property, did not number over one hundred men under arms, and, except the protection afforded by a few scattering stumps, the entire party was openly exposed to the storm of bullets constantly sweeping over the slope and ridge.

The roaring of an occasional gun from the ship, belching forth its shrieking shell, and its explosion in the woods, the sharp report of the howitzer, the incessant rattle of small-arms, and an uninterrupted whistling of bullets, mingled with the furious yells of the Indians, transpiring beneath an overcast and lowering sky, pictured a scene long to be remembered by those who were upon the ground to witness it. A young man (Pocock, or Wilson, as he called himself), having benefited by the protection afforded by a stump, for an hour or more, lost his life by the severance of the spinal column with an Indian bullet, while in the act of running to the rear, for the purpose of procuring water to quench his thirst.

Loud above the din of battle could be heard the shrill screaming of the Indian women urging the delinquent warriors to the front, nor were they sparing of their expressions of contempt to the laggards in the fight; and when not caring for the wounded, or secreting the dead beyond all chance of discovery, any signs of wavering in the ranks brought them like furies to their midst, and woe to the lordly Indian who failed in following their frenzied lead.

Fortunately, as the assembled tribes were ignorant of the language spoken by either of the others, all orders issued by the chiefs, and communications between the different people, were necessarily uttered in Chinook, a jargon common to them all, which frequently informed us of their movements in advance, and revealed many incidents of the battle they were anxious to conceal; and when a certain 15-second shell created havoc in their midst, knowledge of the event came to us through this channel.

It appeared that when the flight of the missile was nearly

spent, its further progress was stopped by their blankets, and while circling around it in a dance, with joined hands, the shell exploded, dealing death to ten of their number and wounding several more.

Returning to the neck, where the firing had assumed a terrific form on the part of a thousand disappointed Indians assembled on the hillsides and in the valley near the swamp, and made desperate by the blunder committed early in the action, the Indians now seemed bent upon remedying their error by raining bullets upon the little band of men holding them at bay.

The initial movement of the division betrayed my identity to Klakum, the Lake chief, and for five tedious hours that savage, safely ensconced behind a barrier of trees, rocks, and bushes, diligently devoted his energies to my removal from the scene; the sharp crack of his Western rifle, a frequent jet of blue smoke, and the fierce "ping" a moment after, plainly described the ardor of his work, and after half a dozen replying shots, aimed at a column of vanishing smoke, he was left to indulge freely in the amusement he had on hand.

The firing continued until 11.45 A. M., when it suddenly ceased in our immediate front, and the deep, guttural voice of Coquilton was heard in the center, issuing undistinguishable orders to his responsive lieutenants on the right and left.

A glance at the situation gave warning of his intention to strike a blow for the annihilation of my division, and, by turning the flank of the others, place his forces in their rear, when fifteen minutes would decide the battle in his favor and give the town up to his destroying hand; and also notified me to be ready for the decisive moment whenever it should come. Quickly arranging my command to meet the tremendous odds to be launched against it, I had only time to impress their minds with the certainty of our scalps ornamenting an Indian wigwam in the event of any weakness on our part in the assaults to be made, and to receive their welcome and characteristic responses of "Never fear for us, sir; we will stand by you or die in our tracks," when the ship's bell announced the hour of noon, and down came the Indians, like so many demons, tearing through the bushes, and filling the air with frightful yells, till they reached the edge of the chaparral, not twenty feet away, where they delivered a terrific volley, and, arrested by the firmness of fourteen men, undismayed by their

noise and numbers, suddenly turned and sought shelter behind the trees and logs.

At this moment the fate of Seattle hung by a thread. With two bounds, or three at the most, the third division would have gone down like grass before a mower's scythe, and in a few moments the battle have been won, the people given up to indiscriminate slaughter, and the village in flames; but failing to make these bounds, the town remained in our possession, and the Indian cause was forever lost.

The Indians, ignoring their fatal error, now appeared bent on overwhelming us with bullets, and from their front and enfilading fire no avenue of escape seemed open, yet throughout those wearying hours of exposure to that ceaseless flow of deadly missiles not one of that little band was harmed. Dr. Taylor, Mr. Smithers, and Tom Russel, together with four young men, volunteers from Meig's mill, across the sound, now appeared upon the ground, adding seven excellent marksmen to the squad, which continued to hold their own until two o'clock, when the howitzer came to their assistance, and her crew increased the force on the Sawdust to thirty-one, with the important addition of a field-gun throwing a 12-pound projectile, and when the latter was in position I directed Morris to land a 2-second shrapnel in Klakum's ambushade. That savage, observing my conference with the officer, and suspecting the object of the interview, withdrew behind the tree, and, as he supposed, beyond reach of any missile approaching his direction; but when, an instant later, a well-directed shrapnel, exploding at the proper time and place, cut away a heavy lock of hair just above his ear, he was unable to comprehend the philosophy of a gun "shooting around a corner," and his well-secured retreat became vacant for the occupancy of any Indian whose ambition might lead in that direction; whether it was taken possession of I am unable to say, but I am certain of experiencing no more trouble from that quarter during the remainder of the day.

Soon after two o'clock, startled by unearthly yells behind me, and fearing the enemy had gotten in the rear, I quickly turned in that direction, when my eyes encountered a ludicrous exhibition of Indian bravado beyond description. Curley, who, at his best, was by no means a handsome Indian, now arrayed in his war dress, and smeared with paint, appeared perfectly hideous, and

was yelling and frantically dancing sideways, to and fro across the Sawdust; grasping in one hand a long, slender musket, and a bow of unusual length in the other, and with both arms extended, he appeared to be pretty much all arms and legs, resembling a huge spider-crab, more than a human being, and altogether presented a splendid specimen of one of Milton's demons let loose from the infernal regions. Madly vibrating from one side of the Sawdust to the other some half a dozen times, he finally sprang several feet in the air, and, giving a frightful whoop, disappeared behind Mr. Yesler's house, highly satisfied with his display of prodigious valor.

Three o'clock came, and also exhaustion for the men, induced by more than twenty-three hours' abstinence from both food and rest, and, wearying of drawing the Indians from their cover, another method was deemed expedient for bringing matters to a close.

The non-combatants having been disposed of early in the day—fifty-two women and children finding refuge on the "Decatur," and the remainder on board the bark "Brontes," waiting for a cargo in the stream, and the adult males being safely housed in the block-house, guarded by the marines, at 3.30 P. M., escorted by Indian bullets, the divisions repaired on board ship, and, manning the battery, the enemy were soon driven beyond the reach of our great guns and kept at bay until after nightfall, when, under cover of the darkness, many efforts were made to set fire to and rob the buildings, but a well directed shell sent them hurrying away to rejoin their companions in the woods.

At 10 P. M. the last gun was fired, and the battle of Seattle was among the things of the past; her enemies had been defeated and turned back into the wilderness from whence they came, never again to rally for the destruction of the people of Washington.

The number of Indians assembled before Seattle is not known; the natives themselves being ignorant of, or declining to give any reliable information on the subject, the matter naturally becomes one of conjecture. But if we consider the preparations made, the number of tribes represented, their confidence in being able to conquer Seattle and Steilacoom with a divided army, and by comparing the amount of noise made by their simultaneous shouts with the well-remembered cheers of a line-of-battle ship's

crew of a thousand or eleven hundred men, in addition to the length of time they occupied, a pretty fair estimate may be made, and they could not have fallen far short of two thousand souls; also, of the number of killed and wounded we have no means of knowing, the most that the Indians would admit being twenty-eight of the former and eighty of the latter.

That our loss should have been only two killed and none wounded appears incredible, and when we remember that one hundred and sixty men were for seven hours exposed to an almost uninterrupted storm of bullets, filling the air like swarms of bees, perforating their garments, and tearing up the ground around them in every direction, the result appears little less than miraculous. However, the confident savage had been arrested in his course of blood—fairly beaten, demoralized, and scattered—while the moral effect was as great as if half the whites engaged had been slaughtered.

The morning of the 27th revealed the fact of the Indians having disappeared, taking with them most of the cattle found browsing near the town, the sole results of an expedition requiring months to perfect, and looking to the utter annihilation of the white settlers in that section of the country.

News of the attack appears to have been rapidly carried to all parts of the sound and inlet. Even at Bellingham Bay, one hundred miles distant, it was known as early as 4 P. M.—seven and a half hours after its commencement—and at noon the “Active” came steaming into the bay, when the governor, with the proof before him, was at last compelled to acknowledge the presence of hostile Indians in the Territory. Their sudden disappearance from before Seattle, in the opinion of Captain Keyes, boded no good for the people of Steilacoom, and at his earnest solicitation the “Active” was dispatched to land him at his post and the governor at Olympia.

I now learned from Yark-eke-e-man that the hostile chiefs, confident of an easy victory at Seattle and also at Steilacoom, where well-stored depots of provisions were to be found, gave little thought to their commissary department, and, being provided with a deficient quantity of food for prosecuting a protracted campaign, their unexpected repulse at the former place left them without resources for supplying their immediate wants. Therefore it became necessary to form into small bands, and scour the

country, to secure the means for continuing the war. From three to four weeks were deemed sufficient for the accomplishment of this object, and, considering that time ample for perfecting his plans, Coquilton, on the 28th, sent word by a Lake Indian, "that within one moon he would return with twenty thousand warriors, and, attacking by land and water, destroy the place in spite of all the war-ship could do to prevent."

The total absence of any movement in the atmosphere rendered the nights, as a rule, absolutely quiet, and with a falling sky and an absent moon they became intensely dark, and of this nature was that of January 28, when, at 7 o'clock P. M., for some reason unexplained, the third division was substituted for those stationed at the south end—the latter being assigned to the defenses on the Sawdust and Block-house Hill—and, while groping in the impenetrable gloom to post the sentinels on that unfamiliar ground, a huge hen-house was unexpectedly encountered, which, being uninhabited, was at once appropriated to shelter the men not required for immediate service.

The occasional barking of a dog alone disturbed the stillness of the night, which was passing quietly away, when, at two o'clock in the morning, the most unearthly yells that ever greeted mortal ears, accompanied by oaths in the highest order of blasphemy, arose from the hen-coop, which instantly brought me upon the scene, feeling sure the savages had succeeded in eluding the sentinels, and were at their deadly work of slaughtering my men, when, pushing open the door, the spectacle presented beggars all attempts at description. A whirligig of arms, legs, heads, and bodies met my view. Ten out of the twelve occupants were "roaring drunk," and mingled in a promiscuous mass of revolving humanity, fighting, biting, kicking, shrieking, and cursing, rendering futile all unaided efforts on my part to untangle this human ball of raving maniacs; but, assisted by the nearest sentry, and the two sober men, in an hour's time they became reduced to a state of somnolency, and were quietly sleeping off the effects of their impromptu debauch.

The lessons of the past taught the people to heed the warnings of the high chief, and a council, held to consider the situation, decided to immediately fortify, and for this object Mr. Yesler volunteered an entire cargo of house lumber, ready sawed for shipment; and, on the 1st day of February, the four divisions of the

"Decatur" assembled, and commenced to erect barricades, consisting of two fences five feet high, placed eighteen inches apart, and filled in with earth and sawdust, well tamped, until bullet-proof. This breastwork, commencing at the shore beyond Plummer's house, extended to the north block-house, and thence over the bluff to the water's edge, the distance barricaded being about twelve hundred yards, and inclosing a large portion of the town.

A second block-house was also erected about two hundred feet easterly from the hotel, on the summit of the ridge near the swamp. An old ship's cannon, battered, rusted, and half hidden in the ground, was unearthed, and mounted on a carriage built for the purpose, which, with a 6-pounder field-piece borrowed from the "Active," constituted the battery of this wooden fort.

The defenses being up, and the greater portion of the land at South Seattle in the condition that nature had left it, after the trees and undergrowth had been removed, to operate the howitzer and crew it became necessary to uproot stumps, haul and pile logs, level the cradle-knolls, and make roads connecting the inhabited portion of the town with the south water-front, where an esplanade was constructed to enable the gun to sweep the shores of that end of the peninsula.

Both officers and men entered upon the work with a spirit worthy of the occasion, and the stumps too large to be extracted with levers were burned, the fires being kept alive night and day till reduced below the surface, when axe and shovel completed the rest, and in a few days South Seattle assumed the appearance of a well laid-out town.

We now come to one of the many amusing episodes of our life in camp, which served to relieve our hours of anxiety and unremitting watch, and to drive away the blues, if any were disposed to have them. On an elevation near the southwest point of the peninsula was situated a large boarding-house, kept by a stout, coarse Irishwoman, who, for some reason, was called Madame Damnable, perhaps in consequence of her masculine build and the vile language constantly flowing from her lips, or it may have been from her resemblance to her prototype of that appellation, a famous Frenchwoman, formerly residing in Callao. However that may be, it was sufficient for us to know that she hated the entire crew of the "Decatur," with a hatred beyond conception, and that she was a terrible woman, and a terror to our

people, who found her tongue more to be dreaded than the entire Indian army recently encamped in our front.

In building roads it became necessary to make one leading directly by the inclosure of this "female dragon's" house, and to obtain proper reliefs the divisions worked in turns, each party sedulously avoiding this particular one, requiring only two or three hours, at most, for its construction, but which consumed a whole week's time in its execution, if I remember rightly.

Every imaginable device was adopted to complete this road, but the moment our men appeared upon the scene, with three dogs at her heels, and an apron filled with rocks, this termagant would come tearing from the house, and the way stones, oaths, and curses flew was something fearful to contemplate, and, charging like a fury, with the dogs wild to flesh their teeth in the detested invaders, the division invariably gave way before the storm, fleeing, officers and all, as if old Satan himself was after them.

The first and second divisions preceded the third, and both Drake and Hughes had returned, discomfited and chagrined, when my time came to face the inevitable. Plucking up all the courage we could muster, and with trembling knees, we essayed the task set before us. For once, the house appeared deserted, not a sound issued from behind its silent walls; not even a dog could be seen or heard; and thus encouraged, we sprang to our work with all the energy of desperate men. The road rapidly progressed, the house was reached, and nearly passed, while our spirits rose with the joyful thought that the old dragon was either absent, or, overcome with constant vigils, had at last succumbed to exhausted nature, and when on the eve of relieving our suppressed feelings in congratulatory shouts, the door flew open, and this demon in petticoats, who had bided her time, shot out upon us like a bolt from a catapult, and, to our astonished senses, the very air seemed filled with sticks, stones, curses, and dogs, and the division, a moment before so firm and hopeful, now, blanched with fear, first wavered, and then broke, and incontinently fled in every direction to escape the fury of this whirlwind of passion. It is, perhaps, needless to remark that I did not volunteer to again undertake the completion of that road, which Captain Gansevoort decided must be finished, cost what it would. The captain himself, on more than one occasion, had felt the full weight of her vituperative tongue, and, being adverse to another encounter, satisfied

his own conscience by ordering his subordinates to "do their duty," which was all very well so far as he was concerned, but the question for us to solve was "*how* to do it." Frequent consultations were held, and one suggested that it might be undertaken at night, but the nights were quiet, the dogs alert, and the madam apparently never slept. Another proposed sending the entire ship's company, but what was the ship's company against that one woman! A third, that a diversion should be made in front by half the crew while the other half attacked the road. This proposition also fell to the ground, and we gave up in despair. Nevertheless, unavailing efforts were daily made to complete this work, till we were fairly driven to our wits' end, when one day—February 12—the fourth division, under Dallas, nerveless and disheartened, marched upon the ground, and had scarcely struck a blow with a pick, when, like a flash, out darted this virago, heavily armed with her usual weapons, and peremptorily ordered them off the lot. Dallas, supported by Sam Silk, the quartermaster, a veritable old-time salt, humbly ventured a parley, and while representing the necessity of the road, its important bearing upon the proper protection of the town, and the security of her own individual property, and at the same time disclaiming any intention of molesting or annoying her in any manner, his speech was suddenly cut short by a billet of wood aimed at his head, and a torrent of abuse and threats showered without restraint, when Silk, who, during the interview, had closely eyed her, now broke in with, "What do you mean, you d—d old haridan, raising h—l this way? I know you, you old curmudgeon. Many's the time I've seen you howling thunder around Fell's Point, Baltimore. You're a d—d pretty one, ain't you?" The effect was magical. With one glance of concentrated hatred at Silk, she turned and flew like the wind, scattering sticks and rocks on all sides, and, with her yelping dogs, disappeared within the house, never again to be seen by one of the "Decatur's" crew. The road was finished, and to Sam Silk belongs all the honor and credit.

On the morning of February 15, the barricades and block-house having been completed, the finishing touches given to the roads, and the town placed in condition to welcome the enemy whenever it might suit his pleasure to appear, and after detailing Lieutenant Drake, with ten men and six marines, to guard

the northern end of the town, and myself, with the same number, together with Lieutenant Johnson and ten men from the "Active," to protect South Seattle, the remaining officers and their commands returned to the ship, with the exception of Dr. Taylor, directed to act as surgeon for both detachments.

With our reduced numbers, time did not drag with us. Incessant watching for an enemy daily threatening to "let slip the dogs of war," clearing away the trees and undergrowth from the eastern slope bordering on the swamp, to destroy the Indian lodgments in that quarter, opposing certain dealers bent upon selling liquor to our men and in trading with the savages, and, finally, in endeavoring to persuade the vicious element overrunning the place to organize for their own protection, rendered our lives otherwise than monotonous.

The winter of 1855-56 was, I believe, an exceptional one, the temperature, as a rule, being exceedingly mild, while the fall of rain was unusually large.

On the evening of December 24 the wind, usually prevailing from southeast and southwest, backed round to the northeastern quarter, and before morning fully six inches of snow covered the ground. During the night the thermometer indicated seven degrees above zero, and ice five inches in thickness formed around the bay shore. Between December 25 and January 6 the mercury alternated from ten degrees at night to twenty-eight degrees during the day, when the wind hauled round to southeast, bringing a warm rain, and in two days both snow and ice had disappeared for the winter.

On the evening of January 8 the divisions were remanded to shore duty, and from that date forward, although under arms, and exposed to the weather all night (and many individuals clandestinely secured short naps, lying on the ground, and in a pouring rain), very little inconvenience was experienced during the entire season; only two of the whole ship's company suffered from colds, caught by having their garments frozen on them while sleeping in a ditch.

Elsewhere has been mentioned the necessity of the officers being arrayed in a manner to render them indistinguishable from the men; therefore, for safety and convenience, many of our costumes consisted of warm under-clothing, heavy marine trousers, high cowhide boots, a slouched hat, five blue flannels, and an

Indian blanket: clad in this manner, we considered ourselves admirably prepared to encounter both rain and Indians.

Usually, after a heavy rain-fall, lasting from one to three days, or longer, there would be a cessation of a few hours' duration, when efforts would be made to procure dry clothing, which was generally effected by removing four of the five flannels worn to give them the benefit of the air while hung upon a convenient stump, and by the time the moisture had become expelled from them the garments retained upon our persons would also have become thoroughly dried, rendering further action in that direction unnecessary; and when evening came, or the rain reappeared, by resuming the flannels, and placing the blanket, folded lengthwise, around the neck, crossed in front, and secured in place with the cartridge-belt, and with rifle in hand, we were all ready for guard duty, rain or Indians, and, with a log for a pillow, for a quiet sleep on the ground, provided the imagination of those on guard did not discover too many enemies creeping up the slope.

An hour or more before daylight, on the morning of February 24, a continuous, dull thumping sound, similar to that made by a heavy trip-hammer at a distance, was heard out on the inlet, greatly puzzling us as to the cause, but at dawn the mystery was cleared away by the unexpected appearance of the U. S. steamer "Massachusetts" looming through the haze as she steamed towards the anchorage.

Commander Samuel Swartwout, commanding the "Massachusetts," being the senior officer present, assumed charge of all naval matters in the Territorial waters, and, after a short stay in port, departed to examine personally the various establishments on the sound.

During the evening of this day, Clerk Charles Francis suddenly died from the effects of a disease contracted previous to joining the "Decatur." The arrival of the "Massachusetts" rendered a further detention of the "Active" unnecessary, and preparatory to her departure, Lieutenant Johnson, with his command, was withdrawn from the barricades on the 27th, and on March 13 that vessel, with Major-General Wool, U. S. A., on board, left Puget Sound for San Francisco, to resume her surveying duties. Meanwhile, where our persuasive eloquence had utterly failed to induce the floating population of the town to organize for the field, starvation, or the prospect of it, happily succeeded in cre-

ating a company, numbering fifty-one members, and when mustered in under Captain Edward Lander the naval forces stationed on shore returned to the ship, leaving Seattle to the care of Company A, Second Regiment Washington Territory Volunteers.*

Early in March four companies of the Fourth U. S. Artillery and the Ninth Regiment of Infantry, arrived at Steilacoom, where they immediately organized by companies for a vigorous prosecution of the war; and in this connection the "Massachusetts," on the 20th, brought to Seattle Company B, Ninth Infantry, Captain F. T. Dent, *en route* for the Duwam-sh and White Rivers.

The Indians, as we subsequently learned, notwithstanding their frequent threats of attacking our lines, had been so completely broken and dispersed after their defeat at Seattle that they were incapable of again concentrating their forces, and at this time were scattered, in comparatively small bands, over the country in search of food and ammunition, when the army of reinforcements arrived, and were soon in hot pursuit, with a prospect of speedily terminating the war.

On March 28 we were agreeably surprised by the appearance of the U. S. steamer "John Hancock," Lieutenant David McDougall commanding, increasing the naval force to three substantial fighting ships, and two of the number being steamers, greatly exercised the Indians, who, possessing a wholesome dread of *pias*-ships,† as they termed them, now began to realize the hopelessness of their cause. The "Hancock," but recently returned from the Behring Sea exploring expedition, had been hurriedly fitted at Mare Island by Commander David G. Farragut for the suppression of Indian hostilities, and proved a serviceable auxiliary to the forces operating in the Territory.

For some time certain unprincipled people had greatly annoyed the governor by "giving aid and comfort to the enemy," in furnishing arms, ammunition, provisions, and whisky to the "hostiles"; and to reach and punish the offenders the governor,

*Lieut. Phelps uses a misnomer here. There was no "floating" population. The men he so emphatically scores were men of family whose *homes, wives and children* were in danger. That is why they could not be persuaded to organize "for the field." Home and families were of paramount importance, and rightly. These men were unfamiliar with the manual of arms; but they could and did fight Indians with Indian strategy and tactics. They would not obey the regulars or the officers. They even "talked back" to their own officers of the militia; but when it came to actual fighting, or looking after the needs of their loved ones, they were no cowards.

†Fire-ships.

being powerless to do so through the civil courts, on the 1st of April, by proclamation, declared Pierce County to be under martial law.

The usual amount of nonsensical bluster and gasconade regarding the oppressed citizen by the hirelings of an arbitrary military rule was freely indulged by those whom it affected, together with the outraged law-dispensers and their "hangers-on," as invariably happens whenever it becomes necessary for the military to save an entire community from destruction by sacrificing a few worthless, incendiary vagabonds, who, in gratifying a sordid appetite to make a few dollars, would willingly consign to perdition every soul in the country. The sympathy of the masses is invariably wasted upon the criminal, and the vilest abuse bestowed upon those who, in the honest discharge of their highest duties, peril health, life, and all they hold most dear, to preserve peace and good government; and the present instance was no exception to the general rule.

Disregarding the proclamation, on Monday, the 5th of May, Chief Justice Lander, in the absence of Judge Chenoweth, detained by sickness, after having convened the spring term at Steilacoom, adjourned till the 7th, and applied to Governor Stevens for permission to hold the court; at the same time, Colonel Shaw, Washington Territory Volunteers, notified the executive that the court already existed.

In reply to these gentlemen, the governor denied Judge Lander's request, and directed the colonel to arrest that official in the event of his continuing the court. Accordingly, on Wednesday, the 7th, soon after the court had met, pursuant to adjournment, Colonel Shaw, with an armed force, entered the court-room, arrested the chief justice and Mr. Chapman, clerk of the court, seized the records, and conveyed both them and the prisoners to Olympia.

Having been called away from the sound to distant cruising-grounds before the termination of this affair, I was never able to learn the result of this conflict between the civil and military authorities.*

Pat Canim, on resolving to unite the fortunes of his people with those of the whites, stipulated with the Territorial authori-

*There never was any trial. Judge Lander was released, and the matter dropped.

ties for the payment of eighty dollars for the head of every chief killed by his tribe, and twenty dollars per capita for those of lesser note, the heads to be delivered on board the "Decatur," and by that vessel forwarded to Olympia, to be counted and recorded. During the month of February several invoices of these ghastly trophies were received, and sent to their destination, which completed our part of the transaction, and the matter had partially passed from our minds, when, on the morning of April 3, a fleet of twenty-five canoes appeared from the direction of Alke Point, steering for our anchorage, and as the occupants were decked in gala costume, with clean faces, we were at a loss to account for the unusual display, until Pat Canim came over the gangway, arrayed in citizen's garb, including Congress gaiters, white kid gloves, and a white shirt, with standing collar reaching half-way up to his ears, and the whole finished off with a flaming red necktie. To our interrogations regarding this wonderful transformation from a dirty savage to a pattern citizen, with much complacency he informed us of his having visited Olympia with one hundred and seventy-five of his own people and seventy-five allies of the Skequam-sh tribe, for the purpose of receiving payment for the enemies killed, and they were now returning to their own country, contented and happy with the result of this visit to their white brothers.

On the 6th of April we received on board, and confined in irons, an Indian named Qui-as-kut, reported by his brethren to be the one who threw Mrs. Brannan and infant into the well during the White River massacre in October, and a few days later the "John Hancock" conveyed him to Olympia, where, soon afterwards, he was shot and killed in the street by a Mr. Brannan, a brother-in-law to the above lady; and on a subsequent date, Mowitch, another Indian, said to have been engaged in the same massacre, was also killed at Olympia by the same man, assisted by one Lake. Mowitch was shot in the head while embarking in a canoe.

A survey having been held on the "Decatur," by order of Commander Swartwout, to ascertain her probable fitness for sea, and in consideration of the serious disaster encountered the previous December, it was deemed expedient to test her capabilities for enduring heavy weather by a short cruise in the straits as far as Esquimaux, Vancouver's Island. Accordingly, on the

morning of April 14 we weighed anchor, and, with half a gale following, stood down through Admiralty Inlet and anchored at Port Townsend the same evening. After a tarry of five days we were once more under way, and twelve hours of hard beating against a strong westerly wind, with an ugly sea, found the ship at anchor in Royal Roads, having made only one and a half inches of water during the passage.

The next day we anchored in Esquimault harbor, where, after exchanging civilities with Governor James Douglass, our time was employed in ship duties, visiting points of interest, and gunning and fishing, until May 5, when our anchor was once more raised, and we returned on the 7th to our station before Seattle, having stopped off Foulweather Bluff to recover a boat stolen from Governor Douglass by deserters from H. B. M. ship "Monarch," and disposed of to Mr. Sayward, of Port Ludlow; but that individual having received information of our proposed visit, neither the man nor the boat could be found, and, consequently, our mission proved a fruitless one.

A court-martial convened at Seattle on May 15, by order of the governor, for the trial of our old acquaintance, Klakum, and twenty other Indians, on a charge of being hostile; but as the evidence proved them only guilty of legitimate warfare, the entire party were discharged after the declaration of peace.

The afternoon of May 29 witnessed an unfortunate affair on the Duwam-sh River bottom; one of those cruel, senseless acts in cold blood, repeated wherever civilized races encroach upon the savage domain, and always productive of trouble, frequently of the indiscriminate slaughter of innocent people, and occasionally of war in its worst form—the wanton, deliberate, and unprovoked killing of unoffending Indians.

Throughout Northwestern America the law of retaliation, by custom, practice, and education, during hundreds of generations, is held as sacred, binding, and honorable by the Indians as the redress of individual wrong or of injured honor by personal combat is considered imperative by the Caucasian race. The customs of both races, identical in their origin, became gradually changed during the lapse of ages, and, as civilization advances, the latter, by introducing scientific and fashionable methods for arriving at the same result, soon learned to regard with contempt and also horror, the savage systems retained by the former. The practice

of the Northern natives varies in a measure from the usages of the Eastern tribes as generally represented, inasmuch with the former, in a case of killing, a settlement may be effected by the offenders paying a stipulated sum either in money, blankets, or other merchandise, to the relatives of the deceased; or, if the culprit cannot be found, any individual bearing the same rank, and belonging to his tribe or race, may be sacrificed in full payment for the debt incurred, when the real criminal is freed from further responsibility.

It was under this unwritten law that Colonel Eby, the first United States collector of customs at Port Townsend, lost his life. The circumstances were as follows: During the summer of 1856 the United States steamer "Massachusetts," upon complaint of the people at Port Gamble, attempted to remove from Hood's Canal a hundred or more Northern Indians, and either through a misunderstanding, vindictiveness, or blundering on the part of the savages, I know not which, a collision occurred, resulting in the death and wounding of forty-eight Indians; and the early departure of that vessel from the Territory deprived the aggrieved savages from seeking redress in the proper quarter, they claiming that the attack was without warrant, and wicked in the extreme, notwithstanding they forced it themselves.

Justice, Indian honor, and tribal pride demanded adequate satisfaction, and in seeking a proper victim, Colonel Eby, being a government official, and of a rank superior to his colleagues, more than any other, in their estimation, answered the necessary requirements for a full and honorable adjustment of all demands, and residing on Whidby Island, rendered the accomplishment of their object an easy one.

A year or more after the affair at Port Gamble, twelve Hieta* Indians of Scowell's tribe, belonging to the Prince of Wales Archipelago, embarked in a swift war-canoe, and, paddling twelve hundred miles, through the tortuous channels of Alaska and British Columbia, arrived at Whidby Island during the early hours of morning, and, noiselessly surrounding Colonel Eby's residence, entered, and took that gentleman from his bed, and deliberately murdered him. Then, without molesting an article on the premises, they quietly returned as they came, traveling two thousand four hundred miles to comply with the demands of a principle,

*Usually Spelt Haida, but pronounced by the Indians themselves Hieta.

and doubtless experienced as keen a relish in the action, and the same proud, exultant satisfaction, as their civilized, enlightened, Christian white brethren enjoy while running a sword to the hilt through their opponents, or in lodging a bullet in their brains. On the one hand the act is cruel, bloody, savage, and on the other noble, high-toned, honorable, and deserving the applause of all.

Of a kindred nature to the foregoing was an affair of honor between the Clallum and Whidby Indians, of which, to a certain degree, I was cognizant. A member of the former tribe accidentally killed one of the latter, and his friends, on demanding a life, or twenty blankets, in full liquidation of the debt, were informed by King George, the immediate chief of the slayer, that as the act was unpremeditated and unintentional, according to the code no crime or offense had been committed, and that chief gave the matter no further thought. Not so, however, with the other party, for the first Clallum they could lay their hands on, was immediately dispatched. King George, in turn, claimed satisfaction, and offered to compromise for forty blankets, which proposition was contemptuously spurned, with an admonition to "make the most of it."

After a lapse of several months the Clallum chief, on touching at Lopez Island, while *en route* to Victoria, found a squaw also desirous of visiting that village, and gallantly offered her a passage in his canoe. During the voyage she inadvertently disclosed her connection with the Whidby tribe, when King George suddenly acquired an unusual appetite, which he declared must be appeased by a dinner cooked on shore, and, turning his canoe towards the beach of St. John's Island, soon landed, and while the woman was busily engaged in preparing the repast he deliberately cut her throat, and went on his way rejoicing in being even with his enemies.

When I last met King George he assured me that if the Whidby Indians were not satisfied he was prepared to sacrifice the last man of his tribe, if necessary, to maintain the honor of his people.

To resume: on the afternoon mentioned, Captain William Webster, having business requiring his immediate attention at Collins's farm, five miles above Seattle, procured a canoe manned by five Snoqualmie Indians, and, accompanied by Captain C. C. Hewett, ascended the Duwam-sh River till reaching the point of destination, when he directed the Indians to await his return, and

on no account to leave the canoe. Soon after the two gentlemen had departed, three of the crew strayed a short distance seeking for berries, when two men, whose names I forbear to mention, unobserved by the party, stealthily followed, and, watching for an opportunity, killed the three unsuspecting Indians, secreted their bodies in the bushes, and quietly withdrew.

Two days later, Lieutenant Drake, with a party of marines, sought for and recovered two of the bodies, partially devoured by hogs, while the third one could not be found. Great indignation was expressed by the community on learning of this atrocious act, and only a leader and a word were wanting for Seattle to have received her first lesson at the hands of Judge Lynch; but cooler counsels fortunately prevailed, and, so far as I have been able to ascertain, no retaliatory measure resulted from this useless crime.

During the months of April and May the United States forces and volunteer companies in the field had succeeded so well with the enemy that the 1st of June found a delegation of Indians crossing the mountains on their way to Olympia, to sue for peace. The "Decatur" having accomplished her mission in the Territory, was now ready for sea, and at 6 o'clock A. M., June 2, she took her final departure from Seattle, towed by the "John Hancock," and accompanied by all the Northern Indians then in Puget Sound, with whom she appeared to be an especial favorite. Touching at Port Townsend for the night, an early hour the next morning saw the ship out in the straits, towing towards the Pacific Ocean, ninety miles away, still escorted by our Indian friends, representatives from the Tongas, Hyeta, Stickene, and Thineshean tribes, and when abreast of Victoria, waving us a last farewell, they paddled towards Vancouver's Island, and soon disappeared. While the ship was gliding smoothly over those placid waters I turned to the history of their discovery, and found written the following:

"Juan de Fuca, whose real name was Apostolus Valerianos, was at one time a Greek pilot, and was in the Spanish service forty years. In 1592 the Viceroy of Mexico sent him on a voyage of discovery to the North west coast of America. Hee followed the coast of California and Oregon, etc., until hee came to the latitude of forty-seven degrees, and there finding that the land trended North and North East, with a broad Inlet of sea between 47 and 48 degrees of latitude, hee entered thereinto, sayling there

in more than twenty days, and found that land trending still sometimes North West and North East and North and also East and South Eastward, and very much broader sea than was at said entrance, and hee passed divers islands in that sayling.

“And at the entrance of the said strait there is on the North West coast thereof a great Headland or Island, with an exceeding high Pinnacle or spired rock like a pillar thereupon.

“Hee went on land in divers places and saw some people on land clad in Beasts’ skins, and that the land is very fruitful and rich of Gold, Silver, Pearls, and other things like Nova Spain. And also hee said that hee being entered thus farre into said strait, and being come into the North Sea already, and finding the sea wide enough every where, and to be about thirtie or fortie leagues wide in the mouth of the strait where he entered, hee thought hee had now well discharged his office and done the thing hee was sent to doe, and that hee not being armed to resist the force of the savage people that might happen, hee therefore set sayle and returned homewards againe towards Nova Spain, where he arrived at Acapulco Anno 1592.”

By this brief history it appears that Juan de Fuca, in twenty days, sailed from the Pacific through the strait bearing his name, then by Canal de Haro, through the Gulf of Georgia and Johnson’s Strait, and finally reached the ocean by the Goleta Channel; when, supposing he had arrived in the Atlantic through the long sought Northwest passage, and being satisfied with his great discovery, he retraced his steps, and during a period of one hundred and ninety-seven years rested under the imputation of having coined the story of his discovery out of material found in his own fertile brain, and it was as late as 1789 before his veracity became established in the rediscovery of the strait by Captain Kendrick, on the American sloop “Washington.” Even the famous Captain Cook, who went in stays and headed seaward, while his eyes were unconsciously resting on the identical passage he was seeking, died in the belief “that it existed only in the imagination of” its reputed discoverer.

To the present day doubts exist in the minds of some writers regarding De Fuca’s credibility, and much adverse criticism has been indulged in by later navigators concerning his reliability, consequent, in a great measure, upon the obscure wording of the paragraph, “*And at the entrance of the said strait there is on the*

North West coast thereof a great Headland or Island, with an exceeding high Pinnacle or spired rock like a pillar thereupon."

This description apparently applies to the western entrance of the strait under consideration, and the locality of the "high Pinnacle or spired rock," is naturally ascribed to a position on the northwest side of the entrance near Vancouver's Island, where, to all observers, an object of this description never did exist.

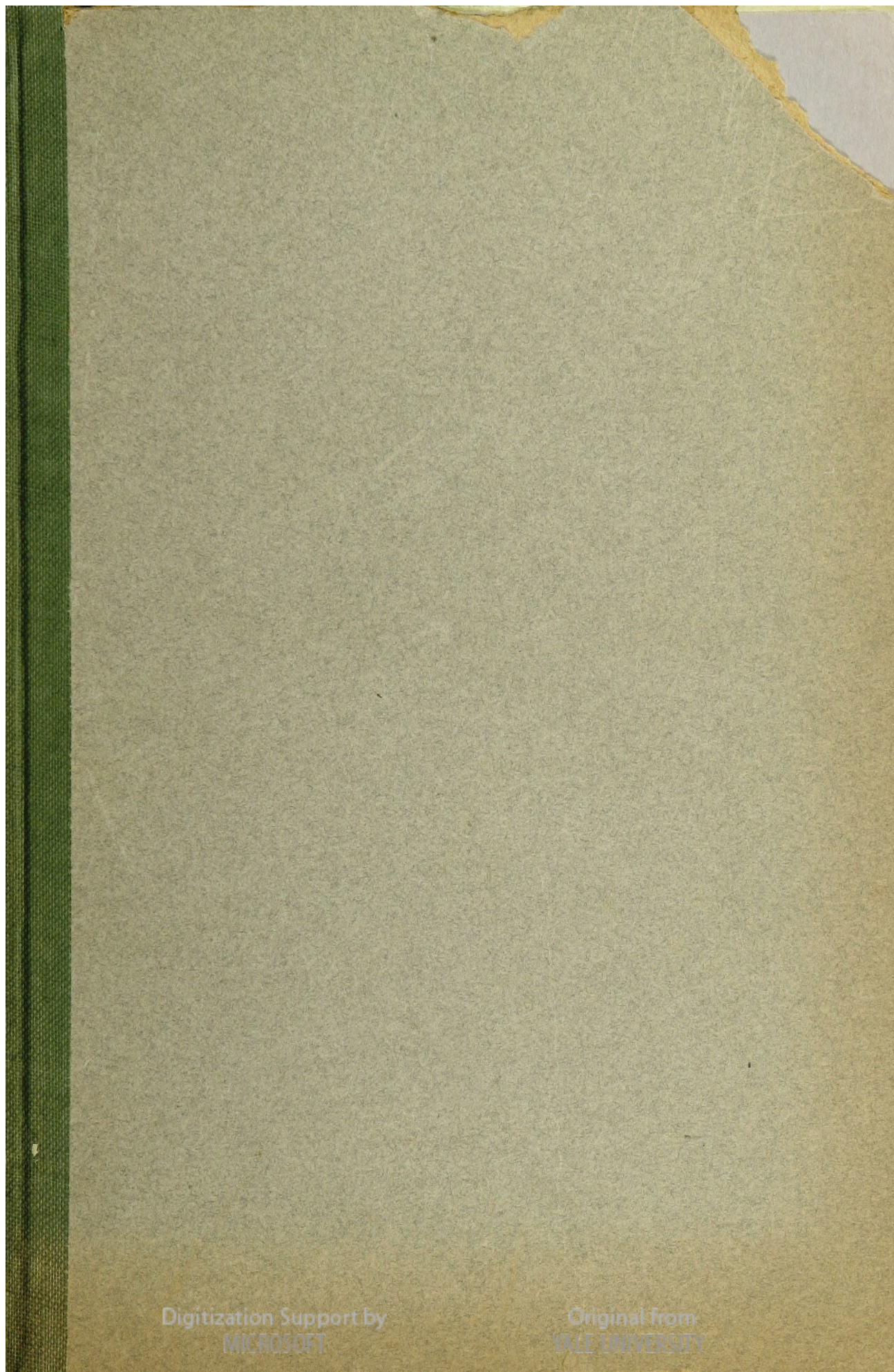
All doubt on this subject is at once removed by applying the paragraph in question to the western entrance of Johnson's Straits, or rather, to the Goleta Channel at the northwest end of Vancouver's Island, where it properly belongs, and then on Mount Lemon, near the southwest end of Galiano Island, a remarkable promontory, twelve hundred feet high, we find a solution of the difficulty, and that "*at the entrance of said strait*"—calling the various bodies of water separating Vancouver's from the mainland as one continuous strait—"there is on the North West coast thereof a great Headland or Island with an exceeding high Pinnacle or spired rock like a pillar thereon"—which fully answers the description, and reconciles the paragraph with the truth as we find it in nature.

The evening of June 3 exhibiting signs of thick weather, we anchored for the night in Port St. John, Vancouver's Island, and at seven o'clock on the morning of June 4, 1856, weighed anchor, and in three hours our noble vessel once more rode over the long gentle swell of the broad Pacific, and when well outside of Cape Classet, and clear of Duncan's Rock, the hawsers connecting our ship with the "John Hancock" were cast off, and as she swept around in a graceful curve on her return to Puget's Sound, an exchange of three rousing cheers expressed our farewells, and, steering to the southward, soon Tatouch Island bore well to the northward of east, and as our eyes turned in the direction from whence we had come, with the exception of the writer, every officer, and nearly every man, on board the U. S. sloop-of-war "Decatur" looked for the last time upon the magnificent Strait of Juan de Fuca.

*By the late-T. S. PHELPS,
Rear Admiral U. S. Navy.*

(Reprinted from first series of United Service Magazine.)

(1,000 Copies, Limited.)



Digitization Support by
MICROSOFT

Original from
YALE UNIVERSITY